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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
126
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BAREFOOT 5 OF 5
color story by
GUY DAVIS
EAGLE AWARDS 2007 WINNER
HIROAKI SAMURA
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OF THE IMMORTAL
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by DANA LEWIS
lettering and retouch by TOMOKO SAITO
cover colors by RYAN HILL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* which was destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashira*, serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

DŌA

A small, brash Ittō-*ryū* warrior, quick on her feet and eager to brawl.

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted body-guard, a hefty Ittō-*ryū* warrior recently imprisoned for a street fight Dōa started.

BURANDO

Deranged doctor and pioneer in *kessen-chu* transference.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell beneath Edo Castle, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Kagimura's demented lead doctor, Burando, increases the speed of the experiments as his sanity slips away. In order to deter any emotional attachment for the doomed inmates that he works on, Burando orders that they all wear crude otter masks. After spying on Kagimura and Edo Castle for a while, Rin and Dōa finally stumble across a mountain of dead bodies and an innocent, simple-minded beggar who takes them to the "Badger Hole"—an entrance to the underground tunnel system that runs beneath Edo Castle and leads to Kagimura's cruel prisons.

designer SCOTT COOK editorial assistant RYAN JORGENSEN
editor PHILIP SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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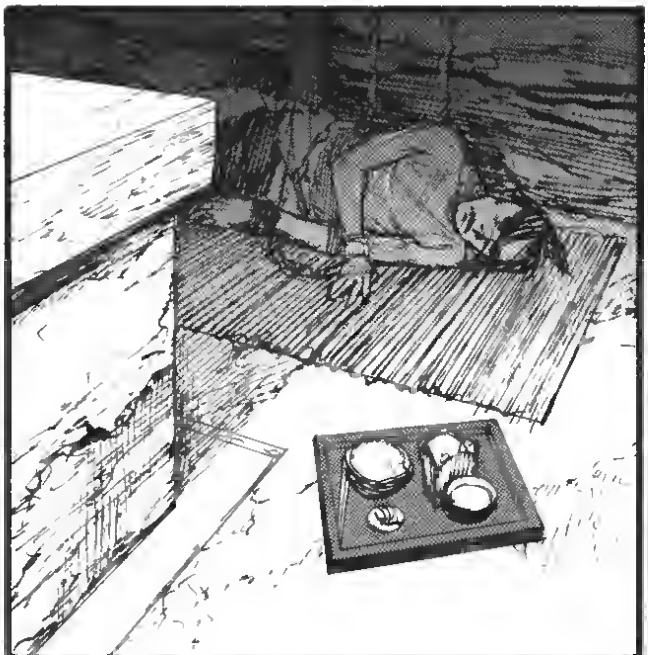
無限の住人

BAREFOOT

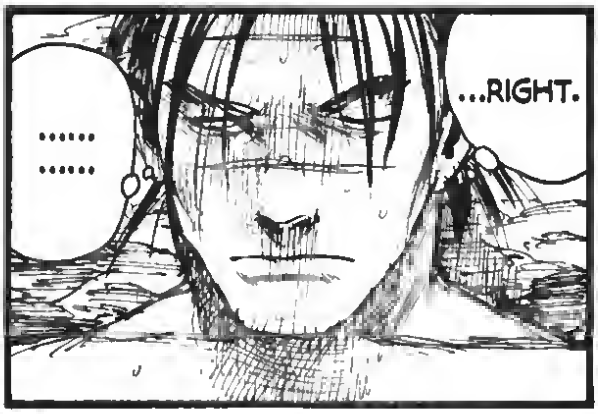
-part five-



GAARG
...
...RNG...
...SHIT!

...AND TASTE-LESS...
.....
.....
STONE COLD...
GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS...?
WHEN THEY KEEP YOU UNDER THAT LONG?
...WHOA.
DON'T FALL ASLEEP WHILE YOU'RE EATING!

TUBE UP MY NOSE ALL DAY...
DRIP DRIP DRIP DRIP...
THANKS TO THAT... DON'T KNOW MUCH ANYMORE. WHO THEY'RE DRAGGING IN EACH DAY...
...WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM. NOTHING...
THOUGH, TRUTH IS...
...FROM HOW BAD THE SMELL'S GETTING...
...I CAN PRETTY WELL IMAGINE...
EAT?! IN THIS STENCH?!
BUT... I WILL EAT. FUCK YOU.
THE DAY I CAN'T EAT, I'M DONE FOR.


.....
.....
...RIGHT.

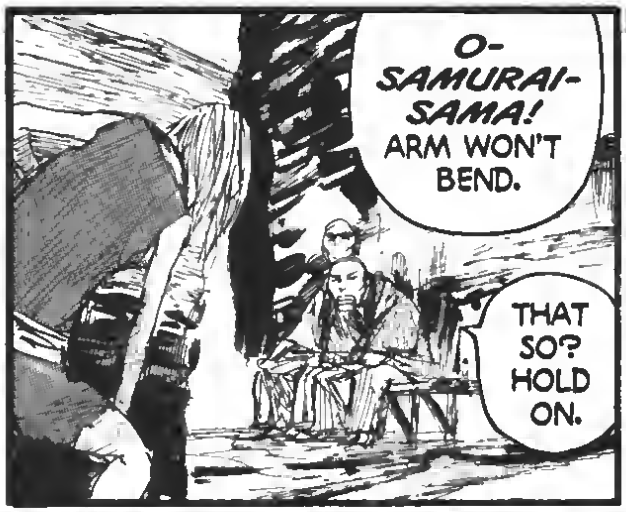
IT'S NOT OVER YET. STILL GOT A CARD...
...ONE SECRET CARD.

JUST NO CHANCE TO PLAY IT.
JUST ONCE. JUST ONE SPLIT SECOND... THAT'S ALL I ASK.

THEY'RE ALL HERE, SIR.
HERE WE GO AGAIN... DAMN BEGGARS.
SILENCE. SILENCE! FIRST OFF-- TOO MANY!
SOME OF YOU LEAVE!
MONEY FOR FOUR! PERIOD!
GO HOME, YOU!
NO, YOU GO!
NOW LISTEN UP! THEY'LL BRING IN BODIES WITH HOODS!
THIS IS WHAT YOU DO! REMOVE HOOD! FOLD LIMBS! STUFF BODY IN BAG!

JUTE BAGS ARE *THERE.*
OH, AND *BEFORE* THAT...
...DON'T FORGET TO SOAK THEM IN THE CHEMICAL BATH!
IT'LL SLOW THE *ROT*, KEEP OFF THE DOGS AND *CROWS!* CAN'T HAVE *CROWS* AROUND THE *CASTLE!*
IF THE LIMBS ARE TOO STIFF, *CALL* ME! I'LL CUT THEM OFF!
WHEN YOU'VE BAGGED THEM, DRAG THEM UP THE SLATS TO THE ENTRANCE. THE MEN THERE WILL GUIDE YOU.
THAT'S *ALL!*
REQUEST DISPOSAL!
HOH! HERE *AL-READY?*
SNAP *TO* IT! GET TO *WORK!*
CAN'T STAND IT...

HANG IN THERE. ONLY THREE DAYS LEFT.
MY OWN DAUGHTER WRINKLES HER NOSE...
STINKING BODIES... STINKING BEGGARS... DRIVES ME CRAZY...


O-SAMURAI-SAMA! ARM WON'T BEND.
THAT SO? HOLD ON.

HAH HAH HAH!
NO REST FOR THE WEARY...

whewf...
GOOD WORK.
...GEH?!
WHAT THE 'ELL?!
O-O-O-SAMURAI-SAMAAA!!
WHAT IS IT NOW?!
...?!
WHAT THE--?

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS *HAND*?!

STEADY. PULL *STEADY*...
OW! OW! *OWW*!

WHAT THE... *DEVIL'D* YOU DO?
JUST GOT A GRIP ON IT T' *BEND* IT IN...
THAZ WHAT *I* WANNA KNOW!

.....
.....
WHAT'S GOING *ON* DOWN THERE...?!

ひっ!
はっ!
ぐっ!
ぬぬ...
THE DAY HAS COME AT LAST...
...HABAKI-DONO!

...THERE WAS ONE BEFORE... BUT A LITTLE ACCIDENT...
EXACTLY! THOUGH, TRUTH BE TOLD...
GNOR!
YOU SAY THIS *MAN* IS...?
GUHF...
OUT!
YES, SIR. *TORA-EMON!*
NO MATTER. *SHOW* ME.
YES, WELL...
SIR!
...BUT NOT A SURGERY ISSUE... AN ACCIDENT. THAT'S ALL.
SO AGITATED HE *CHOKED* ?!

MGH...
MNO!
MO!!
GUWOHHH!!
YEEOW...!!
YOU IDIOT! HOLD HIM DOWN!
S-SORRY, SIR.

UGH!
OH!
GUGL
UH!
SLLK
UUNG...
OHH...

.....
.....
.....
UNLIKE DEWA-NOSUKE, HE'S *NOT* WEAKENING.
UGH! UGH!
AND *MORE-OVER*, HABAKI-*DONO*, HE'S NOT THE FIRST TO REACH THIS STAGE.
AS OF TODAY-- NEARLY *TEN!*

HEH HEH HEH HEH...
AT THIS RATE...
...SUCCESS! BY THE FIRST SNOW.
?!
UH-O!
SWOOP!

MMMG...
MMF...
OH!...!
UHOH...
.....
.....
.....
UNGF...

THOSE EYES...
WAS IT, BURANDO?
...“AGITATION”... WAS LIKE THIS?
I SEE. SO THE OTHER'S...
SIR... I CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN.
IN THE END... THE TOLL THAT THE MULTIPLE SURGERIES AND BODILY CHANGES TAKE ON...
...MIND AND SPIRIT... IS, UH, EXTREME.
WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

EITHER THE BODY WASTES AWAY OR... THE MIND.
B- B- BUT...
I SEE.
IN OTHER WORDS, THIS MAN IS A FAILURE?
...IT'S NOT HOPE-LESS!
IF WE FIND ONE WHO CAN BEAR IT, THEN...!
KCHK
W- W--
--WAIT! PLEASE! HABAKI-DONO...!
BURAN-DO.

I TOLD YOU. IF HE ISN'T UNERRING...
...HE'S USELESS.
THUD
STOP CHANGING YOUR DAMN MOOD EVERY SECOND!
HABAKI KAGIMURA-DONO!!
HUH?!
...!
B-B-BURA--!!

LET ME ASK YOU! JUST WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING ?!
A HEART THAT WON'T RISK FAILURES...
...OR A HEART THAT OVER-COMES THEM?!
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO SHRUG AND SAY SORRY! THAT IT DIDN'T WORK!
AM I WRONG ?!
YOU OWE THE GO-RŌJŪ! THE WAKA-DOSHIYORI! THE BUGYŌ!
HABAKI-DONO! YOU'VE GONE DEEP IN DEBT TO KEEP THIS EXPERIMENT GOING.
I'M STAKING MY LIFE! ON THIS!
I DESERTED MY COUNTRY! I PROVE MYSELF HERE, OR I DIE.
AND ME, TOO!!

HABAKI-DONO! FROM THE DAY YOU LET ME INTO THE CASTLE...
...YOUR LIFE AND MY LIFE HAVE BEEN ON THAT SURGERY TABLE!
I WILL NOT LET YOU PLAY AROUND LIKE I DON'T EXIST!
GRRRRR!!

RIN! OVER THERE!
WHO ARE ALL THOSE PEOPLE?
...?
MY EYES AREN'T AS GOOD AS YOURS!
...AHH.

I SUSPECT... WOMEN LIKE *US*. THEIR MEN DRAGGED OFF BY THE *SAN-MAWARI*...
...NEVER TO COME BACK.
THEY'VE LOST PATIENCE AND GONE TO THE *BUGYŌSHO*, BUT...IT'S HOPELESS.
I DOUBT THE *O-BUGYŌ-SAMA* HIMSELF KNOWS WHAT'S *REALLY* GOING ON.
OUTRAGE-OUS...

DOESN'T THE OLD FART EVER *WORK?!*

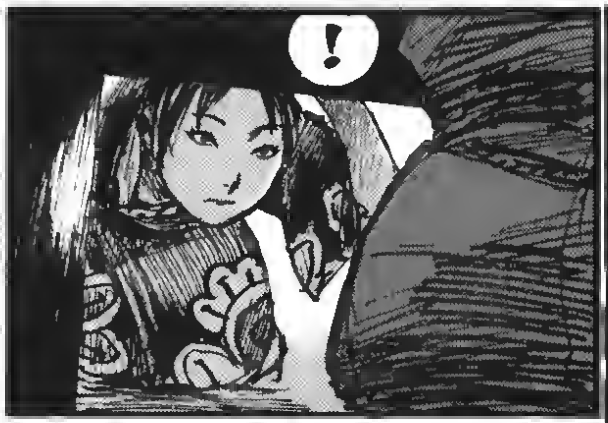
IF WE COME BACK LATER...
NO *TIME* FOR THAT!

THIS. LOOKY.
EH HEH HEH! GOOD THING HE *WASN'T* HERE.
DŌA! YOU *CAN'T* JUST GO--!
OH...HECK. I DON'T FEEL LIKE STOPPING YOU, NOT *NOW.*

...FOR ANOTSU KAGEHISA TO ASK HIM TO DRAW *THAT*...
I DIDN'T *THINK* HE WAS JUST AN *HERBAL-IST* BUT...
SO WE GOT THIS.

YOU LOOK, *TOO*, RIN!
AND THERE'S ONE *MORE* THING.

HMM... NOT HERE?
WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?
AND WHAT COULD FIT THERE?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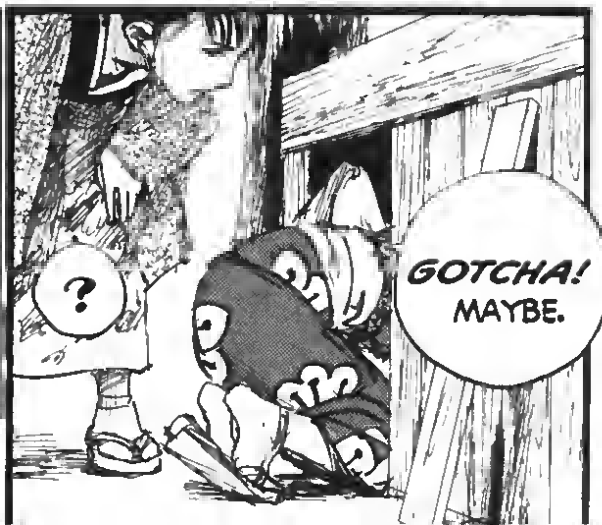
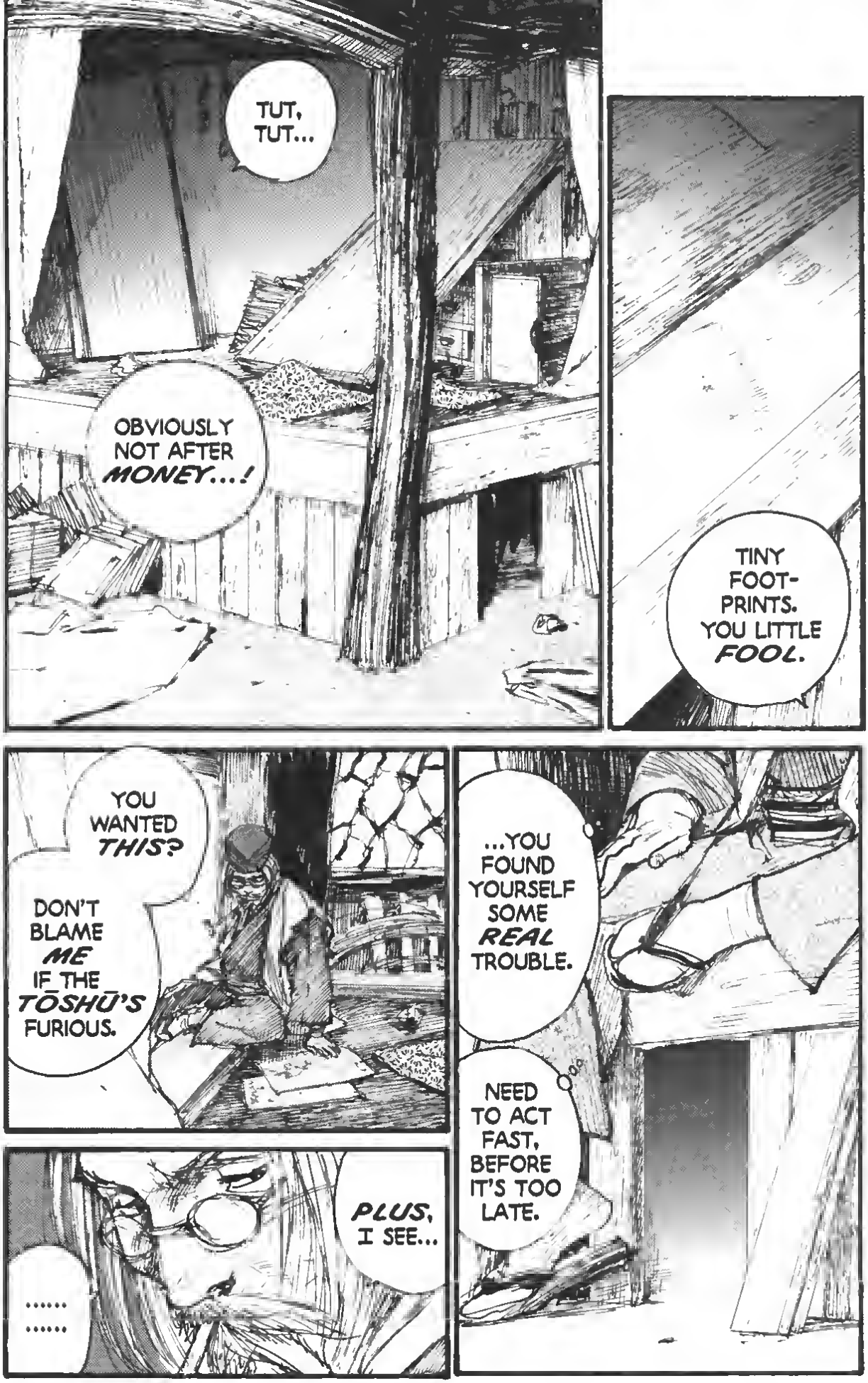

?
GOTCHA! MAYBE.

NOW WE'RE SET.
SO? WHAT ON EARTH IS IT?
RIN! YOU CAN NEST EASY NOW!
THAT'S "REST" EASY.
.....
.....


TUT, TUT...
OBVIOUSLY NOT AFTER MONEY...!
TINY FOOT-PRINTS. YOU LITTLE FOOL.
YOU WANTED THIS?
DON'T BLAME ME IF THE TŌSHŪ'S FURIOUS.
...YOU FOUND YOURSELF SOME REAL TROUBLE.
NEED TO ACT FAST, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
PLUS, I SEE...
.....
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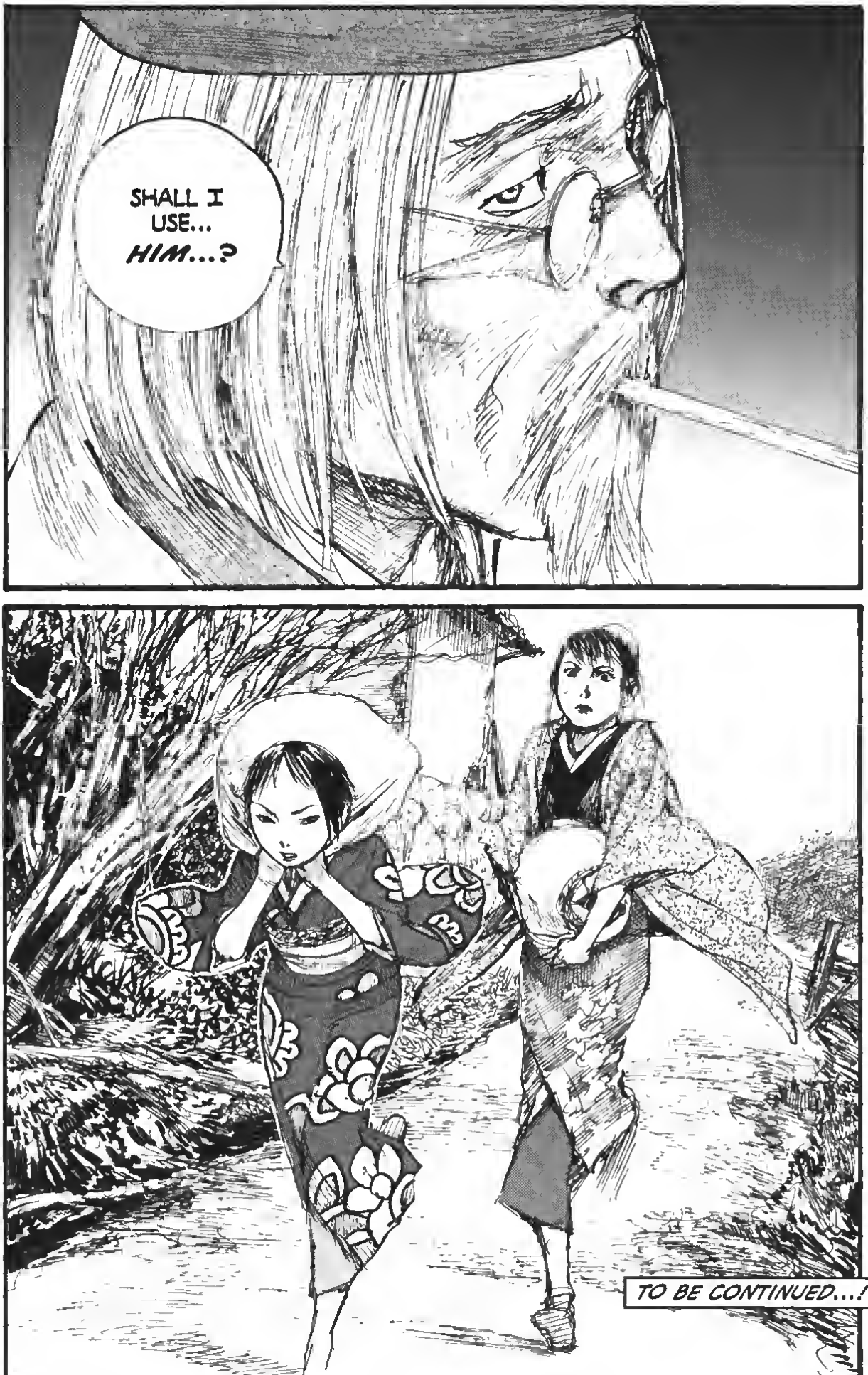
SHALL I USE... HIM...?
TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

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GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū*

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Bugyō: A high-ranked samurai in charge of keeping the peace, with the help of the men under his command and volunteer "posse" members

Bugyōsho: The Edo-era equivalent of a police precinct station

Daimyo: Ruler of a feudal fiefdom.

Dōshin: Low-ranking police officers.

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo

Go-Rōjū: Senior councilors to the shogun, picked from the most trusted *daimyo*.

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa

Sanmawari: Also known as "the three patrols," the *sanmawari* were three groups of *dōshin* who performed specific patrol and criminal investigation duties.

Toshū: Leader, master

Wakadoshiyori: While the *go-rōjū* elders were the shogun's closest advisors, an advisory council of *wakadoshiyori* lords were the hands-on managers of the shogunate bureaucracy.

BACK COVER PINUP BY GUY DAVIS!

Many thanks to artistic magician Guy Davis—creator of comics both marvelous and macabre. Guy's artwork in the newest issue of *B.P.R.D.: Garden of Souls* will be in stores and ready for your eager eyes later this month, with the final issue of that Abe Sapien story arc due in July. Along with his *B.P.R.D.* "Hellboy universe" tales, I highly recommend these other Guy Davis collaborations and solo projects. *The Nevermen, The Marquis, Baker Street, Aliens: Survival, Sandman Mystery Theatre,* and (if you can find issues of the defunct *Métal Hurlant* anthology) "The Zombies That Ate the World" episodes (currently published overseas by Les Humanoïdes Associés in *Les Zombies Qui Ont Mangé Le Monde* collections). Visit Guy's online presence at guydavisartworks.com!

Facing this page, you'll see Nick Black's stunning "Manji and Rin" piece. I met Nick last November at the Wizard World Dallas convention. Keep in touch, Nick, thanks for delivering such a primo piece of work, and I hope you're enjoying warm Gulf Coast weather in Port Neches, Texas! And thank YOU for reading every month. See you next month for our "Life or Death" one-shot issue, in which Yamada Asaemon says, " . . . *taking* a man's life and *wasting* a man's life are two different things."

—Philip Simon, editor

Hyakurin by Hiroaki Samura, the last image in his "China Cats" series.

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